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THE
BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

CONTEMPT presses heavily on the ingenious mind in any case : but much more so, when it proceeds from those, whom we see just reason ourselves to condemn. In the latter case do we stand with respect to England, as was very ably proved by Mr. Barnes, I believe, of Dublin.

At the time, when that malignant and indiscriminate libeller, Pope, poured forth his illiberal sarcasm on this country ; and even in times nearer to ourselves, the English knew us so little, except through jealousy and self-conceit, that we might in some degree excuse the scorn and contempt we experienced from them. We could bear with them, when in their ignorance they assumed the names of Ireland and Irishmen, and rung their changes on them, when seeking to express dullness and stupidity by using them as adjuncts. We could bear with them, when they lavished on us varied abuse in various ways, because we saw, that these slanderers knew us so little, and were so stupidly credulous, as to believe, that some of us *are* born with wings.* We can even bear with that illiberality and grossness, which is so commonly experienced in this country, by those, who, in the hospitable openness of hearts, receive Englishmen to their

houses, and in return, have the pleasure to hear themselves and their country ridiculed at their own tables.† But may we not now begin to express some displeasure at the contempt, which is still our portion from Englishmen, at a time, when Irishmen have proved their ability to direct the affairs of England, and have, humanly speaking, proved her saviours in the field : when her Whitelocks and Burrards led her into disgrace, and a Wellesley was found to redeem her honour, and replace her tarnished laurels by others nobly won from a formidable enemy ?

Your Magazine of September last gives a good specimen of the attention, of which we are deemed worthy, at the hands, not of the illiterate, but of the no doubt learned *N. Carlile, Fellow and Secretary to the London Society of Antiquarians*, (I must give him his full titles, as far as I am acquainted with them) and versifier of Persian poetry, &c. &c. He seems to know less of Ireland than of *Mosellay*. The trifling towns and villages, the comparatively uninteresting topography of a Persian district, he would be well acquainted with. But Ireland, as it were within call, the topography of which was his express subject, that which he pretended to make the object of his study : Ireland, which so amply supplies the wants of Englishmen, with beef, butter, pork, cheese, &c.

* Fact from my own experience.
BELFAST MAG. NO. LII.

† Fact also.
x x

&c. : which supplies England with sailors for her fleets, soldiers for her armies, with commanders to lead both to victory, with counsellors for her cabinet, and with money for her exchequer : this Ireland is so little thought of, so little inquired after, that expensive books may be published crammed with mistakes : published openly and unblushingly, because there is so little danger of detection.

It is to be remarked, that Messrs. Carlile and Smith, *par nobile*, are of the literati. Whence could these errors then have arisen ? Let us suppose them to have been hurried in their book-making job : (as it appears to have been) even this will not account for it. Our only conclusion then must be, that these sapient doctors, tout herissés de grec, were so little accustomed to think of this country, not with respect, but in any way, that in the act of compilation, (that is, as the word means, in the act of robbing other books) they indulged their own inclination to a doze, consoling themselves under the probability of their mistakes with the idea, that John Bull knew as little as themselves, and that he would implicitly swallow any absurdity, however gross, that should be lapped up in *wire-woven, hot-press, &c.* paper.

As your correspondent on this subject has already so well handled them, I should not have troubled you, were it not, that in an English publication, the *Classical Journal*, otherwise respectable, I have met with traces of the same spirit ; and we may well ask, if the minds of the learned be thus affected towards us, what may we expect from the illiterate ?

The last passage of the kind which I happened on, I shall present to you, and leave it for your consideration. The writer in his essay com-

bats the opinion of some previous writer, on the debatable subject of *accent and quantity*. The person whom he opposes, wishes, he says, that we should read *armā verūmqūē cānō*, so that "the first syllable in *virum* should have the same pronunciation as the first syllable in *virtue* ; and the first syllable in *cano*, as the first in *cannot* ; of course too, the first syllable in *arma*, being long, must be pronounced like *air* : whilst the succeeding *a* is sounded like that in *are* ; thus the Latin language would have more difficulty and confusion in it, respecting pronunciation, than even English or Irish ; and it would be better, perhaps, to have adopted the mode of spelling used by the latter, and to have said *Armagh*."

It will not be necessary to point out this wise man's inability to distinguish between a *long vowel*, and a long syllable, which may have a short vowel, as in the case with an *ar* in *arma* : nor to prove how senseless and nugatory his observation about *Armagh* is : those who understand the subject, will perceive it sufficiently. But I would just direct your attention to the design of the passage. The writer has endeavoured to sneer at the person whose opinions he attacks : he thinks no way so successful as that of bringing forward the standing joke ; the mere mention of Irish he seems to think enough ; and, no doubt, is perfectly satisfied at the success of his intended sneer. This is, in his mind, a full substitute for wit and humour ; and he seems to expect, that it will stand in place of sarcasm, and argument. It requires no depth of discernment to see the folly of the whole passage : to the consideration of your readers I leave it, as a specimen of what our learned neighbours think of us ; and I would, as I could, say more on the subject, only from an

apprehension, that you may think I have said more than it deserved

S.M.S.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

IN compliance with the wish of your correspondent C.E., so laudably desirous of removing groundless prejudices against literature, I shall venture to offer my sentiments on the second question proposed by him in the Magazine for August last, "Is the cultivation of taste likely to promote our happiness?" In answer to this question, it seems necessary to begin with defining the word taste, that the idea attached to these words being clearly understood, we may be enabled to reason upon it, as the subject may require. Just taste is that faculty of the soul discerning the beauty of the works of nature and of art, and relishing it accordingly. From this definition, which coincides with the sentiments of the most eminent authors, it is evident that the improvement of just taste is concomitant with the study of science. For, to a person who has a good taste for any art or science, the beauties become obvious, and display themselves in proportion to his progress. Hence it follows, that if the improvement of just taste be not likely to promote our happiness, the cultivation of science cannot have a better effect. You may see, then, that I look upon this problem as very nearly allied to that which appeared in the number for February, and that the same general arguments may, I think, in some manner, serve for both. However, as there is some difference between them, and, as there have been some objections brought forward against the affirmative answer to it, I shall say something, first, to evince that

the cultivation of literature, (which I identify with the improvement of just taste,) highly contributes to our welfare.

Secondly, I shall make a few observations on what is called the fine taste, and lastly, shall endeavour to prove, that the objections alluded to, can boast of neither strength nor solidity. To demonstrate that the improvement of taste advances our felicity, we have only to observe, that the soul *has been created for the contemplation of the Supreme Being; that all its felicity consists in, and is derived from the contemplation of his essence*, and that, therefore, the study of science or the contemplation of the works of the Creator, as it approaches nearest to this pure intelligence, is the most nearly allied to happiness and perfection. It is for this reason, we feel such exquisite pleasure in the study of the works of nature and art, (for "art is but nature methodized") The Creator destining us for the contemplation of himself, has taken care to endow us with such faculties, as to enable us to perceive the beauty and perfection of his works; that by perceiving in them qualities so engaging, we might admire them; by admiring them, we might be induced to contemplate them; by contemplating them, we might admire and contemplate their author, as the source and centre of beauty and perfection. Seeing then, that science is so congenial with our intellectual powers, is it not extremely unreasonable to assert, that the cultivation of it does not promote our well-being. Those who maintain it, *contradict infinite wisdom*; for this is the means appointed by the Deity to arrive at, and complete our felicity. It is to the same source we are to attribute that perpetual thirst the soul has after adding knowledge to knowledge; because all things